



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/dem/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator “Mickey” Switalski Senate District 10

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. Happy Holidays to you and yours. As we approach the end of the current year and the beginning of the new one, there have been many things that have been accomplished this year by the legislature and many things that still need to be accomplished before the end of session on December 18. Governor Granholm recently announced her executive order mandating cuts to the state budget to eliminate a \$900 million dollar shortfall. A bi-partisan effort was involved in determining the composition of the executive order. A bi-partisan solution will still be needed to overcome this shortfall. With the holiday season fast approaching, the Senate earlier this week passed a package of several bills that seeks to prevent and create stiffer penalties for identity fraud. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-mail will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing, while keeping true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or contact me at my Roseville or Lansing office.

Budget Agreement Reached

20J Hold Harmless to be left untouched

The state is close to solving the budget shortfall of \$900 million during the current fiscal year. There have been numerous proposals on potential cuts to the budget. Governor Granholm issued her executive order for budget cuts on Wednesday that involved departmental cuts. This was on top of the more than \$1 billion that was cut earlier this year.

The executive order includes a 5 percent reduction in higher education, a five percent reduction in state revenue sharing and an \$82.5 million cut in governmental departments. Many departments were hit hard, including \$18.9 million in the Department of Corrections.

But the Governor preserved Medicaid, the Michigan State Cooperative Extension program and the Agricultural Experiment Station, prevented releasing inmates early and did not cut benefits to needy families or scholarships to colleges.

A supplemental agreement paused the income tax rollback for six months raising another \$77 million to be spread between the school aid fund, higher education and revenue sharing to local governments.

I have received many letters and e-mails in support of many items not being cut. I tried to ensure that the cuts were done as fairly and as equitable as possible. State Representative Jerry Kooiman's (R-Grand Rapids) proposal to cut hold harmless districts like the Warren Consolidated School District up to \$362 per pupil has received a lot of attention.

Michigan Law requires that the Governor issue an equal dollar cut to all school districts if the budget becomes unbalanced. The school aid fund was \$350 million in the hole. The Governor's proposal amounted to cut of \$196 per pupil unless another proposal was found. As a result of an agreement between the Senate and the governor, the cuts will be around \$100 per pupil. The agreement must still be ratified by the House. Kooiman's proposal and others like it directed extra cuts from districts that have significant fund balances, like Utica Community Schools, and distribute the money to districts that

have little or no reserve. This proposal violates the principle of equity as districts should share the cuts equally and would penalize districts that have chosen to levy an additional tax upon them in order to provide the best possible education for their students. The 20J Hold Harmless cuts are off the table, in part because of my urging. The cuts will be around \$100 per pupil, rather than the original proposal of \$196.

I believe it is a fair and reasonable compromise and I voted for it.

Legislative Update

Election Consolidation

One of the more controversial packages of bills, that of election consolidation, passed the Senate earlier this week.

The package of bills would create four election days for school districts, two of them to be held on the same day as the August primary and the November general election. The other two election dates would be held on the fourth Tuesday in February and the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May. A fifth election date can be held, provided that there is enough petition signatures for a millage or bond election.

The election consolidation package would also require that local units of government conduct school elections in odd years. City and village elections would be held on even years.

Election consolidation, if signed into law, could increase voter turnout by avoiding “stealth elections.” These elections include potential millage increases and generally have low voter turnout, usually less than 10 percent.

Mickey’s Legislation

SB 884- Credit Rating Reform

Many constituents in our district have called regarding the complexity of the credit reporting process and have asked questions on what criteria is used to determine a customer’s credit ranking. State Senator Mickey Switalski (D-Roseville) is a co-sponsor of legislation that seeks to address this issue by requiring insurance companies to make the insurance credit scoring process more accessible and easier to be understood by costumers who use the credit reporting system to receive such things as driver’s insurance and loans.

Senate Bill 884 was introduced earlier this month and would require that insurance companies tell a customer at least four of the major factors in their credit history that was considered by the company for their insurance rate and how the factors impacted their score. SB 884 would also require companies to give customers an open notice that their credit information will be one of the criteria used to determine their insurance premium and would require companies to re-rate a customer who has successfully challenged an error in their credit history and refund any amount as a result of the error. The legislation would also prohibit insurance companies from considering where a person lives or their income when determining their credit rating and would prohibit insurance companies from negatively assessing people who have no credit, such as some young adults and seniors.

SB 884 was referred to the Senate Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions after its introduction on December 9, where it awaits committee approval.

Mickey's Corner

Yellowsnakes: Tread Upon

I have been coaching my son Liam's soccer team since he was 5 years old. We got to pick our jerseys the first year, and he chose the yellow ones.

"What shall we call our team?" I asked him.

"*Yellowsnakes*," Liam ordered.

The name came out of nowhere, but it had a certain ring to it. We've been the *Yellowsnakes* ever since. Astute readers of *The Insider* will recall that the '*Snakes* have been undefeated the past two seasons. But our string was broken this Fall.

We moved up to the Under-12 Division, and we were young. Two of our stars, scoring whiz **Dominic Pica** and dominating midfielder **Jake Russell**, were too young to move up. We picked up several rookies in the expansion draft who had never played before. In a nominally co-ed league, the *Yellowsnakes* had more girls on the team than the rest of the league combined.

OK, enough of the excuses.

We went 0-10.

I went 6 games without seeing my team score. Some parents began coming to the games wearing brown paper bags over their heads. One guy made his kid get out of the car a block from the field so he wouldn't be seen with him. A few would watch the game from our opponent's side of the field and pretend to be with the other team.

Things hit bottom when I uncovered a subtle plot to sack me.

"Mickey, we need you as general manager," my wife suggested. "Let's ask our nephew Neil to come back from Scotland to coach again."

It's a quantum leap from Under-10 to Under-12s. The pressure is enormous, what with the win at all costs philosophy, the insatiable demands of the media, and players demanding extra snacks at halftime. Now the ingrates wanted to kick me upstairs.

But I would not go quietly. I threatened to blow the cover on financial irregularities I discovered in the postgame juicebox and cookie fund.

My contract was extended.

In spite of it all, it was in many ways my favorite season. The kids were great. When I had a winning team, we would never practice. We were good enough to win anyway. But with such a new team we needed to work on fundamentals, so we practiced a lot. Almost every player came to practice every time. The parents were vary supportive and helped out. The kids worked hard, and they taught me that as long as they were making progress and having fun, it didn't matter if we were winning.

Lots of time it was more fulfilling working with them than it was winning with kids for whom it came easy. Most rewarding of all was to see players by the end of the season making moves and getting involved in the play when they had been too timid to even touch the ball the first half of the season.

Liam ended our scoring drought late in the season with a couple of brilliant goals. My veterans including **Ricky Steenland**, **Ashley Just**, **Chayne Campbell**, **Derek Boedeker**, **Samantha Childress** and **Andrew Allor**, worked hard and got better at passing and ball skills. Ashley got her first front tooth after 5 years without any. She is very fast and will be a great high school player. Chayne is the strongest player on the team, and has the potential to take over games when she develops the touch to go with her power.

Derek is a great keeper and tireless ball chaser in the midfield, and Ricky has the inner drive to relentlessly push forward and score goals. He and Liam and Ashley have the potential to work together as a potent scoring machine. Andrew is my stopper in the middle of the defense, and has the boot to send long bombs forward to the offense.

Samantha was the most improved of the veterans. In the past seasons, she was timid and rarely asserted herself. I don't know what got into her, but the last third of the season she was regularly challenging for

and winning balls, dribbling the ball upfield, and even knocked a couple of boys down going for loose balls.

Zach Heaton and **Jonathan Tyrell** anchored our beleaguered defense along with Andrew. Most games were played almost entirely in our own end, so they were constantly under pressure, but they never quit. My anchors were the most fun of all. **Meggan Chamberlin**, **Andrius Gray**, **Kayla McKee**, **Angie Ouellette**, **Nicole Oxley**, and **Brittany Walls** made me appreciate what is most important in kids' sports. They came with limited experience but were coachable and fun to be around. They were always keen to play, and never got down despite our struggles.

Confidence is a big part of meaningful participation, and their confidence grew enormously over the season. By the end of the year they had become legitimate players. Angie let in a couple of easy goals early in the season, but she kept improving, culminating in a stupendous save on a penalty shot late in the season.

Kayla is small but determined, has speed and even developed a sophisticated sense of the field and where best to position herself. Plus she had the best costume as a *ghoulish wife* at my Halloween Party. Kayla had the most team spirit, and always wanted to carry the *Yellowsnake* "Don't Tread on Me" flag after the game ended.

Nicole amazed me with her brain when she had the *savoir faire* to come to the Halloween party as a dead ringer for the Velma of *Scooby Doo* fame, orange turtleneck and all. She and Brittany were about the shyest players on the team, but the last couple of games they were winning balls and throwing their weight around. Evenso, they still blushed sheepishly when they sent a couple of overzealous boys to the turf.

That's OK ladies. That's *Girl Power*!

Meggan and Andrius nearly scored the last week of the season, which would have been only fair for all the hard work they put in. Kids develop in spurts, and these rookies could develop into stars if they work hard on their left foot and keep practicing.

I have to admit, after a couple disheartening slaughters, I was contemplating retirement. Perhaps the game has passed me by. I don't want to become the *Joe Paterno* of Youth Soccer.

I'll decide over the winter.

The *Yellowsnakes* my yet rise again.

Update: SB 601

Senate Bill 601 moved one step closer to becoming law when it was reported out of the House Local Government and Urban Policy Committee with a favorable recommendation earlier this week, after a slight amendment. Earlier this month, SB 601 passed the Senate unanimously.

State Senator Mickey Switalski (D-Roseville) is the primary sponsor of SB 601. SB 601 would allow a city that has been granted home rule powers to adopt an ordinance on the international property maintenance code by reference to that code rather than having to print out the entire ordinance in its entirety, which can be extremely technical and lengthy. The publication of these codes entails exorbitant costs that could be otherwise be saved. Copies of the entire ordinance would be available to those that need a copy or wish to have a copy at the city clerk's office.

The Michigan Municipal League, a non-partisan association of several cities and villages that seeks to promote legislation that benefits local governmental units such as cities, townships and villages, has given its support of SB 601.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville I will not have very many coffee hours in that area. I encourage you to visit the Roseville office.

Sterling Heights/Utica

Jan. 5, Feb. 9, Mar. 1
7-9 P.M.

Location: Sterling Heights Library
(Utica and Dodge Park roads)

Clinton Township

Dec. 29, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 29
7-9 P.M.

Location: Clinton Township Library
(35891 Gratiot and 15 mile)

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